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## TC Executive Director Visits Lebanon to Present Christian Witness Document

TC Executive Director, Dr Rosalee Velloso Ewell visited Lebanon to participate in a discussion on the Arabic language version of the landmark document, *Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World: Recommendations for Conduct* February 11, 2014, at the Arab Baptist Theological Seminary (ABTS) in Beirut, Lebanon. This important gathering was hosted by The Institute of Middle East Studies in collaboration with World Vision Lebanon.

Following an introduction by Rev. Charles Costa, Chairman of the Board of Trustees of ABTS, two of the key contributors to the document, John Baxter-Brown, former consultant on evangelism to the World Council of Churches and current member of the WEA-TC Working Group, and Rosalee Velloso Ewell, Executive Director of the WEA Theological Commission, presented the document, discussing both its content and the process by which it was developed. Velloso Ewell said, 'This document is unique and its necessity lies in its nature: it is genuinely a mission document, it is genuinely an ecumenical document, it is genuinely an inter-religious document, it is genuinely a biblical document, and it is a historic document. Despite its brevity and simplicity, it is necessary in that these things have never been said jointly, by these three bodies who represent about 95% of Christians worldwide.'

Then followed a significant forum discussion between representatives of Maronite-Catholic, Eastern-Orthodox, Arab-Baptist, and Sunni-Muslim traditions regarding the document's potential significance for Lebanon and the broader Middle Eastern context. The panel was moderated by television personality Dr Imed Dabbour and included Bishop Dr Paul Rouhana, Maronite Bishop of Sarba, Lebanon and

former General Secretary of the Middle East Council of Churches; Fr. Dr George Massouh, Director of the Center for Christian-Muslim Studies at Balamand University and Priest of Aley Orthodox Parish, Lebanon; Rev. Dr Hikmat Kashouh, Research Faculty at ABTS and Senior Pastor at Hadath Baptist Church, Lebanon; Sheikh Dr Mohammed Nuqqari, Director of the Islamic-Christian Forum for Business-



ABTS students & staff who participated in the Christian Witness Document presentation and in a NT class taught by Dr Rosalee Velloso Ewell

*Cont. on p 2*

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## Changes at World Evangelical Alliance General Assembly Postponed—Leader to Step Down

The General Assembly of the World Evangelical Alliance, originally due to be held in Seoul Korea in October 2014, has been postponed. The official announcement, dated 11 Feb 2014, stated that 'The decision centred on recent internal divisions among the evangelical community and challenges they pose for holding an Assembly there at this time.' ([see WEA website News](#)) It is expected that alternative arrangements will be made and related activities will be re-planned.

On 7 March, 2014 another statement was released announcing that the Secretary General, Dr Geoff Tunnicliffe will conclude his work with WEA at the end of 2014. He has served in the post since 2005, one of the longest tenures in the history of the organisation. The International Council said that WEA was 'immeasurably stronger' because of his leadership. IC Chair, Rev Ndaba Mazabane, said, 'His contribution to the work has been outstanding. God led Geoff to us in his providence and has now led him to leave the position to younger leadership.' ([see WEA website News](#))

## New Head for TEDS

President of Union University (Jackson, TN), David S. Dockery, will assume the leadership of Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, Ill., on June 1 after the institution's Board of Regents unanimously elected him as president Feb. 28, 2014. Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, one of the most highly respected evangelical institutions in the country, is one of four schools comprising Trinity International University—Trinity College, Trinity Graduate School, Trinity Law School. Total enrolment for the university is about 2,800.

'David Dockery is truly an evangelical statesperson,' said John D. Woodbridge, research professor of church history and the history of Christian thought at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. 'He is one of the most respected Christian educators, authors, theologians and biblical scholars in the United States. Members of the community at TIU look forward to giving Dr Dockery their full and enthusiastic support as he leads them in creating an education for students that integrates the gospel of Jesus Christ with a first class education.'

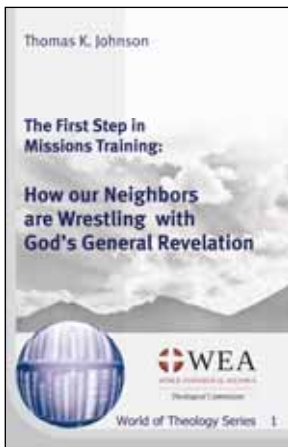
Dockery said he looks forward to reflecting the influence and leadership of '20th century evangelical giants' like Kenneth Kantzer and Carl Henry, who invested heavily at Trinity. 'Our commitments to Christian higher education in general and theological education in particular, our desire to serve the global church and the broader evangelical world and our interests in cultural engagement are all present in a most visible way in and through Trinity,' Dockery said. He added that he was grateful for the privilege to provide leadership to an institution with a strong commitment to preparing leaders for the global church. 'It is an opportunity that we find both exciting and daunting, inviting and intimidating. To be granted such a key leadership role for the larger evangelical community in this country and around the world for the coming years of the 21st century is certainly a great blessing and a joyful opportunity to contemplate.'

Dockery has been President of Union University for nearly 18 years, during which the institution saw 16 straight years of increasing enrolment, more than doubled in size, and expanded the budget and assets by a factor of nearly four.

Source: <http://www.bpnews.net/BPnews.asp?id=42099> (adapted)

## First Steps in Missionary Training

### New title launched in TC Book Series



A book on 'first steps in missionary training' has been launched in the TC's World of Theology series. It is written by Thomas K Johnson, of Global Scholars and Martin Bucer Seminary and focuses on the importance of General Revelation as an essential component for mission practice and theology. It points out that the Paul's letter to the Romans, which was written to explain his missionary efforts and to train Christians there to confidently share the gospel, begins with profound discussion of the position of all humanity before God— general revelation and common grace. (see more on page 4) The author (PhD Ethics, University of Iowa) has lived in Prague since 1996 where he has taught philosophy at Charles University and is Vice President for Research at Martin Bucer European School of Theology.

The World of Theology Series is issued by the WEA Theological Commission and is available on the Martin Bucer website resource page ([www.bucer.de](http://www.bucer.de))

### Lebanon Cont. from p 1

men in Lebanon, head of the Sunni Court in Chtaura, former general director of Dar-al-Fatwa, and professor at St. Joseph University, Lebanon. 'This document is a road map for all Christian denominations to work and pray together for reconciliation in a very sensitive region,' said Maronite Bishop Paul Rouhana. Baptist Rev. Dr Hikmat Khasouh cautioned, 'The ecumenical work plays a vital role as long as it does not dampen the voice of evangelism. It is vital because it invites us to listen and engage with one another, to ask questions and answer others. It teaches us humility and openness. .' Adding a Sunni-Muslim voice to the discussion was Sheikh Dr Mohamad Nuqqari, who made the observation that 'the principles of the document are applicable to Muslims as much as they are applicable to Christians.' In attendance were persons of a variety of Lebanese churches, denominations and backgrounds who posed a variety of challenging, yet enriching questions. In the end, all of the speakers encouraged not only intra-religious dialogue as much as inter-religious dialogue, but also envisioned and emphasized the need for solid steps to achieve this dialogue in the practice of daily life.

IMES has also announced that a consultation on Christ-centred discipleship will be held 16-20 June, 2014 featuring Dr Rosalee Velloso Ewell, Dr J Dudley Woodberry (Fuller Seminary) and Dr J Andrew Kirk (IBTS). For more information, contact IMES [IMES@abtslebanon.org](mailto:IMES@abtslebanon.org)

Source: adapted from <http://imeslebanon.wordpress.com/2014/02/13/christian-witness-in-a-multi-religious-world-recommendations-for-conduct-event-highlights/> Posted on February 13, 2014 by IMES

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## Evangelical-Catholic Talks Conclude

The current round of Evangelical-Catholic talks will conclude at a session to be held at Bad Blankenburg, Germany from 31 August to 6 September, 2014. According to the convener of the WEA team, Dr Rolf Hille, the purpose of this meeting will be to finalize a statement on the talks which will be written 'for the grass roots level on both sides', that is, the various bishops' conferences and the national Evangelical Alliances. Part of the process will be also the evaluation of a questionnaire that has been distributed. Those on the WEA panel besides Dr Hille are Dr Leonardo De Chirico (Italy), Rev José De Segovia Barrón (Spain), Rev Dr Joel C. Elowsky (USA), Rev Dr Timoteo D. Gener (Philippines), Prof. Dr James Nkansah-Obrempong (Kenya, Vice-Chair, WEA Theological Commission) and Professor Dr Claus Schwambach (Brazil). The convener of the Catholic Panel is Revd Msgr Juan Usma Gómez.

A preparatory meeting for this round of discussions was held in 2008 with the first working session taking place in 2009 in São Paulo, Brazil, focusing on doctrinal and ethical convergences between the two groups. A second session was held at the Vatican in 2011 working on scripture and tradition with consideration given to hermeneutical issues and authority. Wheaton USA was the location of the third session devoted to soteriology and issues affecting it such as ecclesiology. The fourth working session was held in 2013 in Guatemala City where attention was given to representative surveys about relationships between the two groups in places such as 'Bible belts' where evangelicals predominate or opposite situation in Latin America and other countries, and issues such as collaboration and religious freedom were paramount.

It is more than a decade since the previous round of Evangelical-Catholic talks concluded.

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## TC Chair Welcomes the Coptic Pope to Germany



During his pastoral visit to Europe, Pope Theodoros II, Coptic Patriarch of Alexandria and Pope of the Chair of Saint Mark, held official meetings at Saint Antonius Cloister in Kröffelbach/Waldsolms, Germany. He was welcomed in Germany by Thomas Schirmmacher, Chair of the Theological Commission of the World Evangelical Alliance, who was leading a delegation of six people.

Schirmmacher asked, 'Why is the Coptic Church important for world Christianity?' The Copts are not Christians 'because it pays well.' Rather, since its beginnings the Coptic Church has been the Church of the Martyrs, answered Schirmmacher, 'because faith in God and in our holy Redeemer Jesus Christ was seen as more important than anything else in the world.' He illustrated this with the first Christian witnesses in his hometown, Bonn, Germany. According to tradition, in the fourth century,

two Coptic Christians went to Bonn as Roman army officers, Cassius and Florentius. They died there as martyrs for the faith, and they are now commemorated by large sculptures in front of the cathedral in Münster, Germany.

The Coptic Church has been repeatedly, almost continuously, persecuted through much of its history. At first the Romans persecuted the Copts, and then western Christian rulers continued the oppression, such that the Copts first regarded Muslim rulers as their liberators during the early Muslim centuries, until the 'on again, off again' persecution by Muslims began. Unfortunately this historical pattern has not come to an end. Schirmmacher noted, 'I cannot only talk about the persecution of the church of the past but also of the church of the present. The Coptic Church is an example of believing in Jesus regardless of the costs.'

Schirmmacher encouraged those present to pray for the church in Egypt but simultaneously to ask political leaders to do everything possible for peace and freedom of religion. But in spite of the immense suffering, he believes that God is the one who has sent Christians from Egypt to Europe, 'where things are not going so well for the Christian faith.' Many have come to Europe because they are seeking freedom, 'but I beg you from the bottom of my heart, do not forget Europe.' A cloister such as Kröffelbach does not only exist to be a gathering point for Coptic Christians 'but also so that the gospel can shine to the people in Germany and Europe who no longer know Jesus.'

After his remarks Schirmmacher gave the Pope a selection of books about the theme of martyrdom which have been published under the auspices of the International Institute for Religious Freedom of the WEA. The Pope responded with gracious thanks and confirmed that martyrdom is a significant theme for his church, both in history and in the present. A representative of Bonn Profiles asked about the current security situation of Christians in Egypt. The Pope confirmed that this situation continues to be rather difficult. Christians truly desire to live in peace and in a spirit of love of neighbours, especially with Muslims. But according to the Pope, the Christian life in Egypt is marked by 'blood, sweat, and tears.'

There was a concluding worship service in the very crowded cloister church, for which many Egyptian Christians travelled great distances. Then Pope Theodoros held a private meeting with the WEA delegation before additional meetings with both religious and political leaders in Europe.

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# First Steps in Missionary Training

By Thomas K Johnson, Global Scholars and Martin Bucer Seminary

In a very broad sense, the book of Romans was written by Paul as a missionary training manual. He wrote it as an organic part of his missionary work, to explain his mission efforts to the church in Rome, to gain support from the church, and especially to train the entire church in Rome to become a missionary church. You see this from the way the book starts, finishes, and is organized around the topic of the spread of the gospel to the entire world.

If this claim is true, then the book of Romans should again become central for missionary training. We want all our missionaries (which means all Christians!) to be able to say, with Paul, 'I am not ashamed of the gospel,' and to really know what they mean with these words, why they are convinced this is true, how this relates to human experience, and what kind of life flows from this message.

What is truly astonishing is that the very first theme of the apostle, after his missionary framework (Romans 1:1-15) and gospel summary (Romans 1:16-17), is *not* the gospel. Paul's first theme is the divine-human conflict which forms the background for all of human experience prior to faith in the gospel. This conflict has to do with God's general revelation, the human suppression of that revelation, God's wrath, and his common grace. Paul regarded understanding these truths about God and humanity as the first step to prepare the Christians in Rome to become effective missionaries; this understanding is also strategically important for our time.

Paul understood that the entire human race is wrestling with God prior to the time when anyone hears the gospel. Conflict with God is the central theme of human existence. Understanding this conflict, this wrestling match of the ages between God and humanity, is the first step toward serious missionary courage and power. Understanding this conflict also provides crucial intellectual tools needed by all Christians as missionaries. The human race is lost and is continually suppressing their God-given knowledge of God. Nevertheless, even when people suppress their naturally given knowledge of God, the created order of the universe continually impinges on human life and consciousness, so that human life is a continual wrestling match with God and his created order, regardless of the belief or unbelief of a person or culture.

God's general revelation forms the hidden theological assumption for all of life for all people regardless of culture or religion, an assumption that is both used and denied at the same time by unbelievers as part of their conflict with God. Thoughtful missionaries (which we all should become) will make this otherwise hidden assumption explicit in their own understanding of life and the gospel; then we can use this understanding to present the gospel wisely and boldly.

A Pauline understanding of general revelation provides a theory of knowledge, a philosophy of culture, a system of social criticism, an evaluative philosophy of religion, a complex philosophical anthropology, and a foundation for social ethics, all as a framework for world missions. Paul's complete worldview was unlike most philosophical theories we encounter, but this total worldview gave him both courage and guidance to lead the nations to faith in Jesus. Paul's God was continually speaking through creation in a manner that no one can avoid and which is the foundation for all of human consciousness, life, and experience, even if people often *want* to avoid God's presence and speech. It seems like people cannot acknowledge it.

For Paul, God's self-revelation through creation, even when denied and suppressed, is fundamental for all that makes us human, including our internal contradictions, and especially our irrepressible religious drives and hard-to-deny ethical knowledge. Because Paul understood the complex, continuous, and universal divine-human encounter, he was proud of the gospel, confident in the truth and importance of the gospel, while living in a world of many religions, cultures, and philosophies. Paul's missionary intellectual courage was a gift of God which came by means of understanding God's general revelation and the self-contradictory response of people in conflict with God.

From *The First Step in Missions Training: how our neighbor are wrestling with God's general revelation* (adapted) (see also page 2)

## Evangelical Review of Theology April 2014: Applied Trinitarianism



The April 2014 issue of ERT is a special issue on Applied Trinitarianism, showing how the Trinity provided the church at the beginning and since with a unified faith and philosophy, and motivation and empowerment for holistic life, understanding and worship. Articles from all round the world discuss the Trinity and world view, spirituality, culture, church life and leadership. Introduced with a comprehensive overview and concluded with the valuable appendix of important doctrinal statements on the Trinity, this is a volume that will inform and inspire. Contact TC for more details

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